

Subject: Street Talk: April 2016
From: LA Great Streets
Date: 04/06/2016 11:24 AM
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**GREAT^{LA}
STREETS**

STREET TALK

April 2016



Community members joined Great Streets on March 19, 2016, to celebrate in the street festival FIG JAM on North Figueroa Street.

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Welcome to the April 2016 edition of Street Talk, the Great Streets Initiative's monthly newsletter! Here, we'll update you on the work happening in our studio and out on the streets. If you're reading this and need more great news in your life, check out our new [website](#), like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), or double-tap us on [Instagram](#).

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See you on the street!

-The Great Streets team

March Event Recaps

Great Streets partnered on three community street festivals this month as part of our Challenge Grant series, where communities applied for funds to re-imagine their streets as public spaces. Additionally, we hosted another community event, the Great Streets Iconathon.



Top row: (left) Pacoima Street Values, (right) Nuestra Avenida
Bottom row: (left) Fig Jam, (right) Iconathon

Pacoima Street Values

During CicLAvia on Sunday, March 6, Great Streets and our Challenge Grant partners Pacoima Beautiful and LA-Más came together to unveil new street furniture and facade treatments for five businesses along the Van Nuys corridor. The Great Streets Challenge Grant project, Pacoima Street Values, was intended to build off of existing street activity and local “DIY” placemaking efforts to support a vibrant sidewalk culture. LA-Más and Pacoima Beautiful helped five businesses along Van Nuys Blvd revamp their storefronts and public spaces to help attract new customers and create a unique sense of place along the corridor. These five revamped businesses were showcased on a tour during CicLAvia, an open streets event that closed down miles of roadway to cars and opened them to people.

Nuestra Avenida

On March 12, the Nuestra Avenida event re-imaged bustling César Chávez Avenue in Boyle Heights as a safer, more pedestrian-friendly street. A team of community organizations led by Multicultural Communities for Mobility, From Lot to Spot, and CALO Youth Build Charter School highlighted the need for safety improvements for people walking and biking along the corridor. The one-day event temporarily activated and created public spaces, including pastel-painted street furniture, portable shade umbrellas, and musical and interactive programming. Almost 700 community members attended the event and over 200 bilingual surveys were collected, providing local stakeholders an opportunity to share their thoughts about street safety.

FIG JAM

On March 21, our last challenge grant event was held in Highland Park on North Figueroa St. The North Figueroa Association business improvement district, Gensler, Occidental College, Teatro Arroyo, NELAart, and other local arts organizations formed FIG JAM to highlight North Figueroa's potential to continue to serve as a vibrant public space for both long-standing and new residents. FIG JAM's aim was to draw attention to the street's rich past, vibrant present and promising future. Temporary improvements included a living museum, which exhibited historical photographs alongside stories of current residents and business. FIG JAM also demonstrated temporary street changes to promote safer active transportation, parklets, and a corridor signage concept for both legacy and newer businesses. Over 50 volunteers helped set up for the event, 28 community organizations participated, and over 500 people attended throughout the day.

Iconathon

This past weekend, Great Streets teamed with the Noun Project and the Goldhirsh Foundation to host a Great Streets "Iconathon," a design workshop to create symbols for Great Streets-related concepts. Urban Design work tends to be technical and difficult to translate in plain language. Creating visual symbols helps to communicate our work, regardless of literacy status or language spoken. Over 80 residents, technical experts, and graphic designers came together at the Mar Vista Arts Department on Venice Blvd to sketch designs for concepts like economic revitalization and intergenerational play. We also sketched physical improvements to streets like parklets, street furniture, and pedestrian scrambles. These icons will be publicly available by May 2nd on the Noun Project's website. Great Streets will also be working to install signs with these icons in the coming months.

Save the Date! Jane Jacobs Walk & 100th Birthday Celebration



May 4, 2016 marks urban author and activist Jane Jacobs' 100th birthday. To celebrate Jane's legacy and the life of cities, the Center for the Living City invites you to join the yearlong celebration with gifts to our cities.

"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

— Jane Jacobs

There are many ways to give gifts to your city. What are yours? Are you involved in a project in your community? Do you have an idea for your city? Consider hosting or attending a Jane Jacobs Walk to discover and respond to the complexities of your city through personal and shared observation. Jane Jacobs Walk is a series of free neighborhood walking, biking, and transit strolls that help put people in touch with their environment and others in their community. Walks occur throughout the year and are informal conversations while you walk, observe, and connect with the city. If you are hosting a [Jane Jacobs Walk](#) or are working on a project in your community that reflects

Jane's wisdom, we'd like to feature it at [here](#). For more information not found on the two previous sites, feel free to email info@janejacobswalk.org.

Councilmember Corner: Felipe Fuentes Council District 7



In 2013 Felipe Fuentes took office as Councilmember for the 7th Los Angeles City Council, representing northeast San Fernando Valley. Prior to his current seat, he has also served Field Deputy in Council District 7, Deputy Mayor for the San Fernando Valley, Chief of Staff to the 7th Council District and California Assemblyman for the 39th District. Felipe is a graduate of San Fernando High School, California State University at Los Angeles and Pepperdine University.

Q: To you, what makes a street great?

Los Angeles is made up of great neighborhoods. In order for those neighborhoods to work, they need great streets. A great street is one that encourages economic growth for existing businesses while promoting greater walkability, bikability, environmental, health and safety benefits to the community. And, I hope, inspires people to engage with their public spaces and one another.

Q: April 22 is Earth Day and you are the chair of the Energy and Environment Committee. What are your environmental priorities this year and how will you address them?

One of my priorities is to move the City of Los Angeles towards developing more multi-benefit projects that can provide additional environmental benefits. Last year, the City Council approved my motion to create a green streets ordinance that would require all new street projects implement stormwater capture and treatment when feasible. Such projects would enable the City to not only make our streets and sidewalks safer, but

also add to our local water supply and reduce pollutants in water runoff. In Council District Seven, we currently have one such project under way on Laurel Canyon Boulevard. While making improvements to the street and building a new sidewalk, the City is also working to capture stormwater to prevent street flooding and infiltrate our groundwater basin. We should be doing more of these multi-benefit projects throughout the City.

I am also working to expand urban agriculture in Los Angeles through the implementation of the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act, which was created by the State Legislature. Under the Act, private land owners would receive a tax incentive for allowing their vacant properties to be farmed for at least five years. I introduced a motion to implement an Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone in Los Angeles to have access to fresh foods. Additionally, Council District Seven also hosts monthly Sustainable Saturday workshops in conjunction with local nonprofits and schools to educate residents about urban agriculture and water conservation.

Q: How do you plan on celebrating Earth Day this year?

This year we celebrate the 46th anniversary of Earth Day. On April 22nd, let's inspire awareness and appreciation for Earth's natural environment. As chair of the City's Energy and Environment Committee, it's important to me, to create policies which allow Angelenos to live more sustainable and resilient lives. Will you be a part of the solution?

Q: What upcoming projects are you most excited about, and in what way will this contribute to your district?

In Sunland Tujunga we are working to create a community garden at Howard Finn Park where various community members and groups are responsible for plots of land to harvest fruits and vegetables. It's my hope the community garden will serve as a tool to teach folks that eating and growing fresh foods are not out of reach.

Additionally, I'm working with the Mayor's Great Streets Studio, the Planning Department and the Department of Transportation to reimagine Van Nuys Boulevard by implementing safety improvements from Laurel Canyon to San Fernando Road. The corridor will be reconfigured to reduce speed and add pedestrian amenities like parklets, curb extensions and continental sidewalks. The result will be safer, more livable streets. Additionally, there will be bike amenities, so bicyclists do not have to navigate their way on our sidewalks. In the long term, METRO is proposing a transit project along Van Nuys Blvd., the East San Fernando Transit Corridor Project, which is currently in its environmental analysis phase. As you can see, there is a lot to talk about when it comes to improving the quality of life for all of our residents who use Van Nuys Blvd.

Q: How would you spend a day on your district's Great Street, Van Nuys Blvd. (i.e. where will you eat, window shop, hang out)?

Van Nuys Boulevard is seeing a new kind of energy. Revitalizing the corridor has been possible through partnerships between the business community, non-profits, and the larger community.

I'd start my day at Café O Muerte enjoying a cup of coffee and reading a newspaper on the outdoor patio enjoying sights and sounds of the Boulevard. For lunch, I'd walk to Antonio's Tacos and Kabob for a healthy, delicious chicken kabob plate. Then, I'd jump on my bike and cruise our great street stopping at one of my favorite murals on "Mural Mile," La Vecindad. Before heading home to Sylmar, I'd check in at Fruta y Cultura for a smoothie. Harvest for the drinks come neighborhood trees and backyard gardens.

I'm proud of the establishments on Van Nuys Boulevard because they attract community members to eat, shop and stay. By celebrating Pacoima, we open up more opportunities for economic vitality, development and cultural tourism.

Small Business Spotlight:

Eastside Rehearsal

Cesar Chavez Avenue, Boyle Heights



Owners Antonio Aguilar and Meg Castellanos in front of their business Eastside Rehearsal.

“What better community to invest in than your own?” Tony Aguilar has answered his own question. He and partners Meg Castellanos and Eddie Rivas have recently opened Eastside Rehearsal, a rehearsal facility for musicians, on César Chávez Avenue in Boyle Heights. Eastside Rehearsal provides rooms fitted with professional instruments and equipment, advertising themselves as an alternative to high-cost monthly rehearsal spaces elsewhere in the city. Tony and his partners see so many talented musicians in East Los Angeles and want to provide a professionally-run, affordable space in their own neighborhood.

Tony attributes his business model to his upbringing. As a child he worked as a field worker in the San Joaquin Valley. My mother was a campesina [someone who lives and often farms in rural areas] and his cousins were organizers and security for César Chávez. “I think that what César mostly fought for is for us to be treated with respect, with dignity.” Tony remembers, “Working as a field worker taught me discipline. This discipline was applied by teaching myself to play guitar.”

He ended up touring for close to 15 years as a musician, technician, stage manager, tour manager, and head of production. “When I was on the road I realized that there were certain venues that treated you well, provided a clean atmosphere for you to feel at home, and there were venues that just didn’t. These venues weren’t fit for human beings to set foot in. It always came back to what I felt I learned from César. Treating people with respect and dignity goes a long way, it was worth fighting for and as a business model it is worth doing.”

Tony and Eastside Rehearsal are mindful of a primary concern in Boyle Heights and along César Chávez Avenue: potential displacement. LA Renter’s Day is recognized this month to advocate for renters’ rights and protections across the City and Eastside Rehearsal shares concerns familiar to all renters. “The biggest fear we have is that when our lease is up our landlord doubles or triples our rent and we have to move or even worse, close. It’s incredibly frightening to invest as much as we have into our

business and have that hanging over our head. Renters must have better rights, it would be a shame if the community we created the space for ceases to exist or becomes something so wholly different that our space is no longer wanted.”

One way to preserve a community is to strengthen it. Tony recently attended the Great Streets Challenge Grant event on César Chávez Avenue, “Nuestra Avenida,” and appreciated how this event created an opportunity to meet and talk with his neighbors. “We like the idea of having anything that takes place on the streets in Boyle Heights. Having people out on the streets creates community.”

Eastside Rehearsal is looking forward to be a part of the community and plans to do so by hosting community events in their space and concerts in their adjacent outdoor parking lot. They are also looking forward to being part of the great tradition of music in East LA culture. Tony anticipates an added benefit to the community will be safety. Offering a safe space for people to play music late at night would be an outlet for community members as well as bring a positive activation for community members of all ages to the streets and sidewalks.

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